

2021 National LGBT+ Conference

Decisions

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Motions

1. Sickness Policy Motion

Carried

Conference, In light of the disproportionate impact on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) community of mental illnesses, chronic illnesses and some forms of disability, we move that employers should include in their sickness policies a specific provision for absences resulting from COVID-19 related illness including 'Long Covid', as well as illnesses and conditions related to lockdown conditions.

LGBT+ people are affected by numerous health inequalities, and the needs of any one individual may vary widely; LGBT+ people experience mental health issues at a significantly higher rate than the general population, and these inequalities are more extreme for trans/non-binary and ethnic minority members of the community. LGBT women are more likely to experience gender-based violence, with the concomitant health impacts and risks with regard to working from home. Trans/NB (transsexual/non-binary) people may have experienced delays or difficulties on accessing gender-confirming treatment. LGBT+ people may experience difficulty or reluctance in engaging with healthcare due to discrimination or the avoidance of perceived or potential discrimination.

LGBT+ workers may have been forced to spend more time in harmful living situations, or have had access to community spaces, 'chosen family' or healthcare affected. This has impacts on both mental and physical health which workers have no means to counteract, and as such they must be accommodated. The impact of the pandemic, not only as an illness but as a social phenomenon should be written into sickness policy.

We ask the LGBT+ Committee work towards the following:

1. COVID-19 and lockdown related absences be exempted from criteria that trigger action under sickness policy;
2. These exemptions must be general, avoiding any requirement to reveal LGBT+ identity.

2. Mental health: a trade union issue

Fell

3. Mental Health and Suicide Awareness to Support LGBT+ members following the Covid-19 Pandemic

Carried

Conference applauds the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) committee for the work undertaken to date to highlight the effects of austerity measures on LGBT+ workers, the services we provide and the knock-on effects of the reduction in those services. Furthermore that a range of governmental bodies, statutory services and other organisations have highlighted evidence that LGBT+ people experience increased levels of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress leading to suicidal ideation and action as a result of the negative impact of their experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. COVID-19 has had a proven negative impact on mental health. The data now available showing the hidden impact on Mental Health of LGBT+ people is stark and highlights the need for local and national suicide prevention strategies that consider LGBT+ issues in their approaches. National Health Service Trusts are starting to realise the importance of suicide awareness and are beginning to make training

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mandatory for staff so they can spot the signs that someone may be heading towards crisis point. It is therefore increasingly important that reps can signpost members to agencies that can give them the help they need.

A number of charities and organisations such as Chasing the Stigma, PAPYRUS, The Samaritans and the LGBT Foundation are doing important work to tackle mental health and suicide stigma and encourage additional support, especially for those falling under intersectional categories in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important that the union supports and promotes organisations which are in line with its values.

It is also important that reps use UNISON's Bargaining on Mental Health Policies guide (which has been updated to acknowledge the impact of COVID) to work with the employer to ensure there is sufficient support for staff experiencing mental health problems. All policies, from sickness absence to reorganisation, should be audited to check where they can offer better support. Mental health problems may well mean that the member is protected as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010 and there should be clear policies around the need to identify and provide reasonable adjustments for such staff.

Conference therefore calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

1. Continue to publicise UNISON's Bargaining for Mental Health policies guide;
2. Work with Hub of Hope and There for You to help branches and regions to signpost members towards suitable organisations and charities working in the field of mental health and suicide awareness;
3. Work with service groups to promote and advocate training on mental health awareness and the potential risks of suicide;
4. Consider the provision of materials for pride stalls and other events with information and signposting to support LGBT+ people within the area of mental health and suicide awareness.

4. INTRODUCING PRONOUNS INTO THE WORKPLACE

Carried as amended by 4.1

Conference recognises the need for inclusiveness for our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) members in the workplace. Many transgender and non-binary people feel unsupported by their employers when it comes to gender identity. Colleagues and patients or service users may assume someone's gender identity. We believe that the regular use of pronouns on name badges, ID cards and email signatures would alleviate the awkward questions that members face on a day to day basis.

The regular use of pronouns within the working environment will lead to a more inclusive workplace. Conference therefore welcomes the UNISON 'Why pronouns are important' factsheet.

Employers should therefore encourage all staff to include their preferred pronouns on badges, ID badges and email signatures.

Conference calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

Encourages branches to promote the UNISON factsheet, urge employers to adopt this policy, and work with employers to promote inclusion by utilising UNISON's model Inclusive workplace policies.

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5. SUPPORTING STONEWALL AND OUR TRANS COMMUNITY

5.1 fell

Carried as amended by 5.2

Conference notes that there are groups and individuals who we would normally consider on the left of the political spectrum and under the guise of “gender-critical feminism”, are aligned with a government that they would otherwise denounce.

These agitators now agree with Tory ministers that trans people should not have equal rights and, in fact, have too many already.

Equalities minister Liz Truss is pushing all government departments to withdraw from the trans inclusive Stonewall Diversity Champions scheme, which counts 250 government departments and public bodies among its 850 members, who are given the tools and training to embed LGBT+ inclusion in their working practices.

No amount of generic #PrideMonth tweets or platitudes about respecting trans people, while in the next breath denying trans women’s identities, can hide this from the unbiased observer.

Many Stonewall co-founders, such as Ian McKellen, Lisa Power, Michael Cashman and others without public platforms stand staunchly by Stonewall being trans inclusive.

It is convenient for the anti-trans corners of society to ignore the awkwardness and cynicism of their alliances in order to pursue their agenda against the charity, one of the few in Britain standing by trans people despite loud voices misguidedly pitting women against trans people.

The main “charge” against Stonewall is conveniently vague, but can be traced to a report commissioned by the University of Essex that looked at the cancellation of a seminar at which an academic who is seen as “gender critical” was due to speak, as well as another cancelled event.

But it really all comes down to a misinterpretation of Stonewall’s trans inclusion guidance.

Stonewall’s advice is based on the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance, which was itself recently reaffirmed by the high court. In order to provide clear advice on trans inclusion, Stonewall uses commonly understood language in place of statutory language.

But according to the critics, “gender identity” is a more capacious term than the legally sanctioned “gender reassignment”; in other words, they argue the charity is sneakily trying to expand legal protections for trans people. In reality, the more accessible language that Stonewall uses is in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Those who seek to limit or roll back legal protections for trans people, however, want equality law and guidance to only apply to those “transsexuals” they grudgingly approve of.

Conference calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

1. Continue to denounce the anti-trans position taken by these agitators and support Stonewall being trans inclusive;
2. Encourage branches to urge employers to join the Diversity Champions scheme and to promote trans inclusive policies through negotiation and bargaining;
3. Encourage branches to engage with staff forums to promote the positive aspects of employers being members of the Diversity Champions scheme to promote positive staff cultures and the use of inclusive language and policies.

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6. Make Call Centres more trans friendly

Carried as amended by 6.1

Many of our trans members and indeed the wider community can often give accounts of occasions whereby they have had to access public services via the telephone and their experiences have been upsetting, anxiety inducing and on occasions distressful. Interaction with call centres are often an intimidating experience. Most of our public services are initially accessed via their call centres as they are the first point of contact, even more so since the Covid pandemic.

It is natural for call takers to form a mental image of a caller from the sound of their voice. This may prompt a generic reply such as “Good Morning Sir/Madam, how can I help”, based on that assumption. This often causes someone who identifies as the opposite gender or is non-binary some distress. The caller’s name and any pronoun can often be missed or in some cases is not always appropriate or a priority for organisations, an example being when taking 999 emergency calls.

However, there are ways we can use language to make the process feel more comfortable and less distressing. An example would be using a phrase such as “Just to confirm, I heard that as, is that correct?” This will sound less challenging than “what did you say your name is?” For someone who is already feeling anxious and then experiencing their gender being challenged, even a well-intentioned enquiry may sound unsympathetic and challenging if not phrased correctly. It’s important that we do what we can to make our call centres more accessible to our trans members to ensure that they are not missing out on vital services by being too anxious or stressed to pick up the phone.

We ask the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus committee to work with the trans caucus and trans members to create an advice sheet on the correct and best practice, words and phrases for call centre staff to use that is less hostile and confrontational to those that fall under the trans umbrella. This advice can then be taken back to branches by stewards and used to assist in the training of call taking staff to help make our public services more accessible by telephone and less distressing to our trans colleagues.

14. Next Steps in the Campaign for Trans + and Non-Binary Rights

Carried

Conference notes with concern the rise of the anti-trans movement, some of which is specifically in the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community and within elements of the women’s’ rights movement. Whilst in perspective the movement may be small, it is also vocal and has the ability to quickly alienate trans + and non-binary people from spaces that they may have previously held as being safe for them.

Unfortunately, the attack on trans + and non-binary rights is perpetuated by the current government’s approach which includes abandoning meaningful change to the Gender Recognition Act, stopping work on its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) action plan and disbanding its LGBT panel.

Conference further notes that the anti-trans movement effectively uses social media tactics to attack and drown out LGBT+ and supportive voices, including regular ‘trolling’, (the mass targeting of social media accounts with negative messages) of positive and LGBT+ inclusive messages posted by public sector organisations.

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Conference observes that recent racist social media posts surrounding Euro 2020 have been rightly condemned including via the media and notes the announced government strategy may be to support football banning orders for those identified as making racist social media posts. This is a positive step in changing how people act on social media and Conference believes that a similar approach for homophobic, biphobic and transphobic social media posts should be adopted.

Conference believes that whilst there should be no debate about trans + and non-binary rights because the right for people to exist isn't a question, it is clear that there is much work to do in order to shift public and media opinion and to make our workplaces, social spaces and communities inclusive and supportive places for trans + and non-binary people.

Conference therefore calls on the National LGBT+ Committee to:

- 1) Continue its campaign for positive reform of the Gender Recognition Act.
- 2) Continue to promote trans + and non-binary rights as a key theme throughout its work for the next year.
- 3) Produce updated campaigning materials in support of trans + and non-binary rights.
- 4) Support campaigns that call for social media companies to do more about and be held accountable for offensive content produced by its users.

15. CONDEMN THE GENDER CRITICAL MOVEMENT

Carried as amended by 15.1

Conference is appalled by and opposed to the ever-growing right wing anti-trans movement commonly referred to as "gender critical". This movement has become very well organised and very well-funded in recent years and has established itself by forming several pressure groups such as LGB Alliance, who are forming links with members of the Government and influencing policy on a United Kingdom (UK) wide scale.

The methodology of these groups is not to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) rights, but rather to cause direct harm to and remove hard won rights from trans people. It is becoming increasingly clear the attacks on the trans community will be used as springboard for attacks on the rights of other groups, including LGB and gender-diverse people.

Elements of the gender critical movement have adopted the language of the Section 28/2A period to promote conversion therapy principles and their obsession with the definition of women threatens real harm towards trans people and lesbians.

Conference calls upon the LGBT+ committee to:

1. Condemn this movement at every level in our society and continue to encourage a show of solidarity towards the trans community, from the trade union movement through the Trades Union Congress;
2. Continue 10 campaign raising awareness of the danger this movement presents to human rights in the UK, working with other parts of the union and other organisations as appropriate;
3. Use education and communication materials to counter misinformation and intolerant rhetoric.

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16. Trans Equality - Louder and Prouder!

Carried

The toxic debate ignited by the government's consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act underlined the importance of our union supporting and representing trans members effectively.

Attacks on trans people have escalated further over the last year. Groups trying to roll back the rights of trans people are encouraging supporters to lobby public bodies to replace 'gender' in their equality policies with 'sex' and claim that some have agreed to do so.

There has been a series of press articles about Stonewall having 'lost its way' by becoming trans inclusive, and a sustained attack on Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme. Attacks are being coordinated to undermine support for Stonewall's work on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) equality at work.

The tactics being used are almost identical to the tactics seen around the time of Section 28, when gay men were portrayed as sexual predators and a danger to children to spread fear and mistrust.

Conference recognises that recent years have seen a concerted international campaign against trans people, and there is growing evidence of this being linked to the far right.

Conference notes that:

1. The Southern Poverty Law Centre in the United States (US) reported that in 2017, at an annual right-wing, fundamentalist event called the Values Voter Summit, transphobia was discussed as a tactic to be deployed, because rallying against homosexuals was not working any more, One of the far-right panellists said: "Trans and gender identity are a tough sell, so focus on gender identity to divide and conquer...trans activists need the gay rights movement to help legitimise them...If you separate the T from the alphabet soup, we'll have more success";
2. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation's study on the evolution of extremism in the first 100 days of the Biden Administration found that "Transphobia has long been one of the most major and ubiquitous narratives around which the far right mobilises... transphobia should be recognised as a security concern.";
3. Some anti-trans individuals and groups in the United Kingdom have links with far right and alt right religious groups in the US and elsewhere;
4. Targeting a minority, and spreading false information to provoke hatred and distrust by preying on people's fears, are classic far right recruitment tactics.

UNISON's position is clear: trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid. Conference recognises, however, that UNISON now needs to become more visible and more vocal in promoting trans equality

Conference therefore calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

- a) Produce a briefing to help members counter the gender critical narrative and provide information on the links with the far right;
- b) Pledge support to appropriate organisations, such as Stonewall and Mermaids, that are being subjected to attacks because of their work on Trans inclusion, and explore ways of working together;

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- c) Raise the issue of links with the far right with the national executive council and explore ways to increase the visibility of UNISON's support for Trans equality.

17. Poor Provision of Healthcare for Trans People

Carried

This Conference notes:

- a) That there are extensive long waiting times varying from 2.5 to 5 years for a first appointment at a gender dysphoria clinic for adults in the United Kingdom (UK). This is a devastatingly long and unacceptable time and means people often seek private provision, if they can afford to;
- b) That in April 2021, the actions of National Health Service (NHS) commissioners has resulted in a complete removal of lower surgery provision to trans men. This happened because the NHS commissioners didn't renew the contract with the only surgeons experienced in lower genital surgery for trans men;
- c) That the contract has been re-tendered, with NHS commissioners stating they are now seeking bids from other providers to carry out the surgery, despite no other surgeons being trained in these procedures in the UK;
- d) That there are many trans men who are part way through the surgeries, (there are usually three ops involved) and this is leaving them in unbearable limbo. There are others (including some in pain) who need revision surgery;
- e) That research demonstrates that trans people who undergo gender-affirming surgery are significantly less likely to seek mental health treatment than trans people who do not access gender-affirming surgery.

This Conference resolves:

To call on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus committee to work with the relevant structures in UNISON to:

- a) Highlight this detrimental change in healthcare provision to trans people;
- b) Campaign for improvements in healthcare for trans people, including the training of surgeons within the NHS, and increasing resources for NHS gender identity clinics.

18. Bi+ Inclusion – Stronger Together

Carried as amended by 18.1

Conference notes people with an attraction to more than one gender challenge the sometimes-binary categories we use to organise the world. To take one example, a bisexual plus (bi+) person's orientation often cannot be determined by their current partner(s). However, the fact that bi+ identities defy assumptions many people have about attraction and relationships can also mean that bi+ people are particularly stigmatised. While biphobia shares common elements with homophobia and transphobia, it has several distinctive elements. Crucially, biphobia can come from two directions – it's expressed by straight people and gay/lesbian people, creating exclusion and prejudice from within and outside the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. This exacerbates the challenges already faced by bi+ communities compounding the shame and prejudice that many bi+ people experience.

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Research shows that bi+ people experience numerous, distinct types of discrimination. They are significantly less likely to be out to friends or family because they fear prejudice. However, when they look for support from other members of the LGBT community, they often experience rejection there, too. Bi+ people also reported fear around being open about their orientation when seeking medical help. When they did come out to their healthcare provider, 22 per cent of respondents experienced inappropriate questioning about their sexuality. To improve outcomes for bi+ people, it's vital that we acknowledge that this combination of erasure and harmful stereotypes creates unique problems, and that we need unique solutions to solve them.

There is a clear need for more research into the experiences of bi+ people, particularly those who face multiple types of discrimination, such as people of colour, people of faith, disabled people, working class people, and trans people. We must build a conversation about the ongoing and emerging needs of bi+ communities, as well as marking our commitment, as the largest public sector trade union, to investing in work which will create meaningful change for all bi+ people. We are stronger together and we must ALL amplify the voices of bi+ people and challenge bi+ erasure.

Conference calls on the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) committee, working with the bi+ caucus, to:

1. Liaise with the other self-organised groups, young members organisation, retired members organisation, regions & branches to recognise and challenge biphobia and to create resources to support this work as part of a wider campaign to recognise and challenge biphobia;
2. Uplift and support marginalised bi+ people working with our other self-organised groups. Black bi+ people are doubly underrepresented, erased and discriminated against. Bi+ men face stigma within and outside of the LGBT community. Ace bi people are told they 'Cannot' be bi. Bi+ people of faith are often invisible in narratives about LGBT inclusion in faith spaces. Sometimes trans bi+ people are invalidated when people question how their bi identity intersects with their gender identity.
3. Run a campaign highlighting the impact of biphobia on our bi+ members from within the LGBT+ community including an editorial in Out in UNISON promoting the use of inclusive language.

19. A hub of hope

Carried

Conference notes the difficulties we've all faced during the pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions, especially on our mental health. For many, this meant isolation, anxiety, and fear, restricted in a 'hostile home' or environment, unable to be their authentic selves. Struggling with their sexuality or gender identity, unable to access support network or peers.

Even before the pandemic bisexual plus (Bi+) people were often stigmatised with biphobia from both straight people and by gay/lesbian people. At the same time Bi+ people's experiences of discrimination are often undermined or ignored altogether. Stonewall's 'LGBT in Britain – Bi Report', published in 2020 showed bi people experience numerous, distinct types of discrimination. It highlighted 31% of respondents had been insulted, pestered, intimidated, or harassed in the year prior

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to being surveyed, and of these, 75% had not reported it to the police because they feared it would not be taken seriously.

Bi+ people are less likely to be out to friends or family because they fear prejudice. Compared with almost 75% of gay and lesbian being open about the sexuality this figure falls to 36% for being out to friends and even lower at 20% to family. And when they look for support from other members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, they often experience rejection there too.

Bi people also reported fear around being open about their orientation when seeking medical help. When they did come out to their healthcare provider, 22 per cent of respondents experienced inappropriate questioning about their sexuality. A quote from the report read “My girlfriend was heavily advised to get a HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) test because I’m bisexual, ... The assumption was that I was promiscuous, with the doctor speaking to my girlfriend as if she couldn’t trust me and treating me notably differently once she knew my sexuality.”

To improve outcomes for Bi+ people, it’s vital we acknowledge that this combination of erasure and harmful stereotypes creates unique problems, and that we need unique solutions to solve them.

One such solution is the “Hub of Hope”, a completely free and confidential national mental health database. It brings together organisations and charities, large and small, across our nations who offer mental health advice and support, together in one place you can find with the click of a button, accessed via any browser or app. Conference calls on the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) committee, working with the Bi+ caucus, to:

1. Liaise with the other self-organised groups, regions & branches to raise the issue of positive mental health and to promote the resources available to support mental health wellbeing including UNISON’s guide on bargaining for mental health policies;
2. Continue to promote the inclusive environment of our LGBT+ self-organised group and to reiterate a zero-tolerance approach to biphobia within UNISON;
3. Run a campaign highlighting the impact of biphobia on our Bi+ members from within the LGBT+ community including an editorial in Out in UNISON.

21. CONVERSION THERAPY

Carried

Conference notes with regret that conversion therapy which includes medical, psychiatric, psychological, religious, cultural or any other interventions that seek to erase, repress or change the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person remains completely permissible under law in the United Kingdom (UK).

Conference acknowledges the damage this practice has had on generations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) young people and adults which especially targets them when they are at their most vulnerable with many experiencing self-harm, eating disorders, mental ill-health, and attempted suicide as a result.

Stonewall’s Unhealthy Attitudes report (2015) found 10 per cent of health and care staff had witnessed colleagues expressing that lesbian, gay and bi people can be “cured” of their sexual orientation. In their 2018 report ‘LGBT in Britain – Health Report’ found that one in twenty lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people (five per cent) have been pressured to access services to question or change their sexual orientation when accessing healthcare services.

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We acknowledge the Memorandum of Understanding that national health service (NHS) England and NHS Scotland co-signed along with many other organisations which states “..that the practice of conversion therapy, whether in relation to sexual orientation or gender identity, is unethical and potentially harmful.”

This abusive practice must be brought to an end. It is a significant public health and a human rights violation, therefore a total legal ban and criminalisation of those who undertake conversion therapy are immediately called for. There is no place for conversion therapy in the UK. Such practices are discriminatory and harmful to the mental health and wellbeing of LGBT+ people.

We call on the UK Government, as a priority in this session of parliament, to introduce legislation that would ban conversion therapy in the UK. If the UK Government does not take action to ban conversion therapy, we call on the devolved Governments/Administrations to bring forward their own legislation as far as it is possible within the powers of their respective Governments/Administrations. We must campaign to ensure there is appropriate support for survivors, including access to counselling, as well as safeguarding and awareness training for healthcare and religious organisations.

Conference calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

1. Support end conversion therapy campaigns, including, Stonewalls and End Conversion Therapy Scotland;
2. Work with the NEC, Service Groups and Branches to raise awareness of the damage that conversion therapy does and encourage them to support end conversion therapy campaigns;
3. Lobby the UK Government and devolved Governments and Administrations to criminalise and ban conversion therapy;
4. Work with the health service group to seek that healthcare regulators and education providers ensure that LGBT+ healthcare needs are included in all accredited education/training programmes.

22. Freedom of Information Requests

Carried

Conference notes that there has been a reported rise in public sector organisations receiving a range of Freedom of Information requests relating to a number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans + related issues, which have included requests about memberships and costs associated with Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme, costs and permissions for flying rainbow flags and lighting buildings up in rainbow colours and costs and time spent on attending Pride events, to name a few.

Conference believes that some of these requests come from organisations and individuals who are not interested in progressing LGBT+ rights and the results usually end up on the front page of a newspaper alongside some questionable use of statistics. This has an impact on the health and wellbeing of our members involved in workplace LGBT+ groups who often come under unfair scrutiny about their actions and activities, many of which are done in spare time on a shoestring budget. This can affect the commitment of people to participate and be involved in the important work of LGBT+ groups.

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Conference also notes that the Freedom of Information Act has been used to obtain documents that have been used in a wide range of positive campaigns, including by UNISON and when used properly is a valuable tool to hold public sector organisations to account.

Conference believes that campaigns that attack LGBT+ rights which use Freedom of Information requests as a tool need to be called out and challenged, that staff who are subject of Freedom of Information requests need to be supported and that organisations who are subject to these campaigns should put out positive messages affirming their commitment to LGBT+ rights.

Conference therefore calls on the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Publicise and criticise the rise of the use of Freedom of Information requests to attack LGBT+ rights.
2. Consider and if appropriate produce guidance for UNISON activists on negotiating about responding to Freedom of Information requests, highlighting topics such as what vexatious requests look like and sharing some best practice responses.
3. Produce an activists briefing on how we and the organisations we work for can set the scene and proactively share messages of solidarity and support when we become aware of another FOI campaign that targets LGBT+ rights.

23. Climate change is a LGBT+ issue

Carried

Conference applauds the motion adopted at this year's Special Delegate Conference (SDC) 'Tackling climate change and COP26' where a UNISON Scotland delegate told SDC: "The growing crisis of climate is one we can no longer put aside, either as a society or as a union. The threat of climate chaos is going to drive massive social change. We no longer have a choice about that." He went on to tell conference that UNISON had to ensure that its members' voices were also heard on public services and public sector jobs.

We are at a defining moment when it comes to climate change. Its impacts are global in scope and unparalleled. Climate change is going to affect every one of us on the planet, but its effects will not be the same for all.

Greta Thunberg's school strikes and climate strikes supported by the trade union movement are seen as major reasons why the issue is still alive. There is a tendency to present the use and development of green technologies as a miracle solution. It is not just global warming that we are dealing with, but global warming in an unequal and unjust world. Without equality and equity, we cannot effectively fight climate change.

Based on the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is evident that people who are already most vulnerable and marginalised will experience the greatest impacts of climate change. The IPCC identifies lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) communities as one such group, which, because of its social vulnerability, is a hidden victim of climate change.

The vulnerability of LGBT+ people to climate change is worsened by poverty and discrimination. Around the world LGBT+ people are vulnerable to homelessness as they are often forced to leave their homes due to conflict with the family, violence or abuse. The precarious economic and physical conditions of homeless persons may lead individuals to choose sex work, despite the risk of criminal prosecution, so that they can meet their basic needs. It is often difficult for LGBT+ people to access

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services, particularly in countries which criminalise same sex relationships and where discrimination against trans people is widespread.

Homeless people and those with inadequate housing will be affected strongly by any natural calamity and are clear victims of temperature rise and polluted air.

In climate related emergencies, LGBT+ people face discrimination in emergency provision such as shelters.

There is now a general recognition that you could hardly fight what is the most prominent environmental threat to humanity while you ignore issues of equality and social justice.

Conference therefore calls on the national LGBT+ committee to

1. Work to raise awareness of climate change amongst LGBT+ members and its impacts on marginalised communities;
2. Work with the International Section to raise wider awareness of the adverse effects of climate change on LGBT+ communities;
3. Encourage branch and regional groups and caucuses to consider action on climate change in conjunction with LGBT+ activism.

24. Trans Rights in Europe.

Carried

Conference congratulates Transgender Europe (TGEU) for their work in promoting trans rights in Europe. However, 2021's Trans Rights Map published by TGEU documents an alarming loss in rights when compared to 2020. While progressive countries in Europe have slowed down in increasing protections for trans people, moderate countries have often stalled progress altogether. Worse yet, a growing number of countries have been aggressively removing rights from trans people. Conference is concerned that some countries still require a person to be sterilised in order to have their gender legally recognised. Amongst those, five are European Union (EU) member States: Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia. Alarmingly, one EU member, Hungary, has banned legal gender recognition.

Conference notes that on the positive side, eight European states now allow a person to adapt key documents based on self-determination, with procedures that are human rights compliant. Still, recognition for non-binary people is only possible in two states: Iceland and Malta. Considering that the Fundamental Rights Agency found that 62% of trans respondents to the European Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) II Survey (2019) did not identify exclusively as one gender, the absence of non-binary recognition fails the majority of the trans community.

Conference further notes that in July 2021, the Spanish government approved a legal gender recognition bill based on self-determination, and started its legislative process. If approved without changes, the law will guarantee that trans people over the age of 16 are able to change their registered gender; it will be enough to fill out a form. A psychiatric diagnosis and proof of medical treatment will no longer be required. Youth aged 14-16 must have parental approval and all applicants will need to confirm their decision three months later though non-binary individuals will not be able to access legal gender recognition.

1. Conference calls on the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) committee, working with the trans caucus, to:
2. Continue to support TGEU and their work promoting trans rights;

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3. Work with UNISON International and other appropriate bodies within UNISON towards possible affiliation to TGEU;
4. Encourage regional LGBT+ networks to seek affiliation to TGEU.
5. Promote the work of TGEU within UNISON.

25. DEFENDING INTERNATIONAL LGBT + RIGHTS

Carried

Conference notes that it is not a good time to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) internationally. The rise of anti LGBT rhetoric in Government agendas from Brazil to Poland which has led to a rise in hate crime towards LGBT+ citizens of these countries and has made these parts of the world unsafe for LGBT+ people.

This is coupled with the continued variance of Commonwealth countries in relation to LGBT+ rights. For example - 35 of the 54 Commonwealth member states continue to criminalise same-sex intimacy.

Next year The Commonwealth games come to the UK with Birmingham hosting the 2022 games.

Conference sees this as the perfect time to continue to raise and highlight the continued abuses of LGBT+ people in these countries as well as highlighting support for LGBT+ friendly spaces at international sports events such as the forthcoming Pride House in the city during the games. During international events such as this many athletes claim asylum due to them being too scared to return home due to the anti LGBT+ sentiment and legislation in the country they represent.

All countries should be safe for all people regardless of their gender identity or sexuality.

Decisive action against the rising tide of LGBT- phobic hate must be taken.

Conference calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

1. Work with UNISON international committee to lobby Government to intensify efforts to end abuses of LGBT+ people internationally;
2. Work with and support national and international organisations such as ILGA to put pressure on these countries to abolish these anti LGBT+ laws;
3. Highlight and work with local branches of UNISON in Birmingham area during the Commonwealth games to support them to highlight the inequality in LGBT+ rights in participating countries;
4. Support the pride House movement in Birmingham and raise awareness of this as a safe space for LGBT+ people during the games.

26. Justice for Palestine

Carried

Conference notes that UNISON statements issued in May in response to the situation in East Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank and Israel said that:

1. UNISON will continue to call on the United Kingdom (UK) government to:
 - a) Suspend the U K's arms trade with the government of Israel and support calls for a United Nation's (UN) arms embargo;
 - b) Prohibit trade with illegal settlements and suspend the UK Israel Association Agreement until the Israeli government complies with its human rights clauses; and,

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- c) Demand a halt to the planned evictions of families in Sheikh Jarrah and other communities, the destruction of Palestinian homes and other property, and the building of illegal settlements, which violate fundamental human rights, are illegal under international law and undermine the prospects of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.
2. The continued oppression of Palestinians seen in recent weeks further demonstrates why UNISON, human rights organisations including Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem and UN special rapporteurs, recognise that the systematic discrimination faced by the Palestinian people constitutes the crime of apartheid under international law;
3. UNISON will continue to support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) as a legitimate and practical way to persuade the Israeli government to end its repression of the Palestinian people and contribute towards the building of peace;

Conference further notes that updated research released by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in April shows that Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds continue to hold at least £4.4 billion in companies involved in the illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine and the violation of Palestinian human rights. 85% of the LGPS funds analysed have holdings in companies included in the UN Human Rights Office's list of 112 business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Conference instructs the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) committee, working with the national executive council and international department as appropriate, to: -

- i. Continue to encourage LGBT+ members, branch and regional groups to take up actions in support of Palestinian rights;
- ii. Promote UNISON's guide 'Palestine: Is your pension invested in the occupation' which provides scheme members with a range of actions they can take to encourage their fund to put pressure on companies involved in the occupation of Palestinian land, and begin the process of divestment from companies listed on the UN Human Rights office's list of business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements;
- iii. Continue to raise LGBT+ people's awareness why not to go on holiday or make cultural or sporting visits to Israel;
- iv. Continue to publicise the work of PSC, and urge LGBT+ members to join and get their branches and regions to affiliate;
- v. Explore with PSC and LGBT+ groups in selected trade unions the potential for setting up a new LGBT+ Palestine network to maintain a consistent focus on LGBT+ solidarity with the Palestinian people and engage LGBT+ trade unionists in its work, in line with the decision of 2018 LGBT Conference.

27. PALESTINE

Carried

Conference notes that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) communities remain a major target of the 'Brand Israel' campaign which aims to change Israel's image abroad from a land of war and occupation to one of a modern and liberal tourist destination, thereby seeking to undermine LGBT+ communities' support for the Palestinian people.

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Conference, however, believes there can be no Pride in a state where LGBT+ Palestinians, like all Palestinians, live under occupation, under siege, under systematic discrimination or in exile.

Conference also notes that UNISON is a longstanding supporter of the Palestinian people and was one of the first to respond to their call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). But the United Kingdom (UK) government plans to introduce new regulations to “stop public institutions from imposing their own approach or views about international relations through preventing BDS campaigns against foreign countries and those who trade with them”.

Conference is concerned that this will undermine local democracy, restricting the ability of public bodies to purchase, procure and invest ethically, in the interest of workers and the communities they represent.

Conference instructs the National LGBT+ Committee, seeking the support of the National Executive Council as need be, to:

1. Continue to promote UNISON’s publication, “Palestine: Is Your Pension Fund Investing in the Occupation?” and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign’s (PSC’s) LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme) Divest Campaign;
2. Take all appropriate steps to defend PSC’s victory in the Supreme Court in April 2020 and to oppose the UK government’s intention to introduce new legislation to stop local government pension funds deciding not to invest in companies complicit in Israel’s breaches of international law and Palestinian rights;
3. Step up its campaigning work to raise LGBT+ people’s awareness why they should not be going on holiday to Israel, going to Tel Aviv Pride or sitting on a beach only an hour’s drive from Palestinians living under siege in Gaza or resisting eviction in Jerusalem;
4. Urge and assist Regional LGBT+ groups to investigate Pride events with which they are involved with a view to challenging any sponsors which are subject to BDS campaigns;
5. Continue to develop links with Palestinian LGBT+ groups;
6. Publicise PSC’s work, encourage LGBT+ UNISON members to join PSC and get their branches and regions to affiliate; and,
7. Seek to work with the Trades Union Congress LGBT+ Committee, with LGBT+ groups of other trade unions, and with PSC on the above campaigns with a view to sustaining a consistent focus on LGBT+ solidarity with Palestine.

28. National Disability Strategy: Smoke and Mirrors

Carried

Conference notes the Government’s Disability Strategy which was published on 27 July. Disappointingly, despite a public consultation the Government failed to properly engage with Disabled People’s Organisations (DPO’s), which is currently subject to legal challenge. Consequently, the strategy has been criticised and described as “tokenistic”, and a “tick box exercise”.

The strategy distinguishes between the different legislative framework of pointing out different approaches between the UK, Welsh and Scottish governments, and the Northern Ireland Executive. It states that “Underlying the approaches of devolved administrations is the Social Model of Disability” suggesting that this might not be the approach underlying Westminster Government’s thinking. The social model of

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disability is the framework in which UNISON, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) members, organise, recognising that people are disabled by barriers, environments, discrimination and attitudes and not by their impairments or conditions.

The strategy outlines areas disabled people are experiencing discrimination, crime and barriers including:

- Participation in public life
- Inaccessible public transport and housing
- Lack of reasonable adjustments and lower pay in employment
- Limited choice and additional expense for goods and services
- Inaccessible, unresponsive and fragmented public services
- Exclusion from leisure and socialising
- High levels of hate crime and domestic abuse
- Unequal impact of Covid-19 pandemic

In response to the UK Disability Survey, over 50% of disabled people in employment stated that the employer is inflexible or fails to make reasonable adjustments. Nearly 75% reported promotion opportunities were different from their colleagues. Also highlighted was the detrimental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with Disabled people being more likely to have had earnings reduced, faced redundancy, hours decreased, or been furloughed.

The Government's proposals lack ambition and weight. The majority are voluntary and lacking sanctions for employers who fail to incorporate the measures;

- Access to Work Adjustments Passport
- Encouraging employers to recruit, retain and progress disabled employees
- Promoting the Voluntary Reporting Framework
- Scale up supported employment services
- Encouraging flexible working and introducing unpaid carers' leave
- Improving access to advice on employment rights for disabled people and employers

- Transforming Access to Work
- Reviewing and strengthening levels 2 and 3 of Disability Confident.

Conference asserts the Disability National Strategy is "smoke and mirrors". It does not go far enough while giving the impression that the Government is meeting its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Conference calls on the National LGBT+ Members Committee:

1. Seek the views of Disabled LGBT+ members on barriers in the workplace in relation to multiple discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation and gender identity
2. Raise awareness of issues and publicise resources relating to the intersectionality of being LGBT+ and disabled and other identity factors.
3. Liaise with the National Disabled Members Committee to ensure that factors relating to being LGBT+ and disabled are included in any work or campaigns they carry out in relation to the strategy

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29. THE UK POLICING BILL: AN INFRINGEMENT OF LGBT+ RIGHTS

Carried as amended by 29.1

On 5th July 2021, the third reading of The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC Bill) was agreed by the House of Commons. The Bill has been condemned as “draconian” by charities, unions, faith groups and human rights organisations. The Bill has been widely criticised as it will drastically curb civil liberties in the United Kingdom (UK), allowing the police to end protests that are deemed to cause disturbance or annoyance.

Under the Bill, UNISON members exercising their right to protest could potentially face arrest if they fail to follow restrictions imposed.

LGBT+, Disabled, Black and Women members and activists have a rich history and culture of using protest to highlight inequalities, discrimination and oppression and to campaign for human rights. LGBT+ Disabled trade union activists were at the forefront of campaigns to embed the social model of disability, opposing medicalisation and pathologising of disabled and trans members and being involved in protests against inaccessible transport and buildings. LGBT+ Pride events also have their roots in protest and conference continues to affirm that Pride is a protest but is rightly concerned that this Bill puts our protests under threat. Conference is also concerned that trade union members may consequently face disciplinary action in the workplace as a result of this Bill.

The bill also discriminates against the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community including the creation of a new criminal offence of residing on land without consent in or with a vehicle. It amends the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, broadening the ‘list of harms’ that can lead to an order to leave a site, increases the period for return from three to twelve months, and reduces the number of vehicles permitted on the land from six to one, criminalising the congregation of the GRT community.

GRT people are subject to major discrimination and prejudice and are disproportionately affected by poverty, shorter life expectancy and higher infant mortality and maternal death.

Conference notes that the website of the Traveller Movement has information about GRT LGBT+ people - and a guide to Support for GRT LGBT+ people and their families - and that there was an LGBT+ Travellers contingent on the 2019 London Pride march.

Conference calls on the National LGBT+ Committee:

1. To liaise with Labour Link raising issues about the potential impact of the Bill on trade union members in particularly LGBT+, Disabled, Black and Women members including in relation to the impact on the GRT community
2. Support and publicise any campaign that UNISON is involved in including in relation to the impact on the GRT community
3. To keep LGBT+ members updated on the progress of the Bill and any subsequent guidance that is available
4. Work with the NEC and other parts of the union as appropriate to raise awareness of discrimination against the GRT community, in particular GRT LGBT+ people
5. Endeavour to make links with GRT LGBT+ groups

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30. The future of Adult Social Care for LGBT+ People

Carried

Conference notes the Tory government, has broken manifesto pledges by raising National Insurance contributions and suspending the “triple lock” on pension increases. On 7th September 2021, it published ‘Build Back Better: Our plan for health and social care’ announcing an impending White Paper on the future provision of adult Social Care in England.

Conference acknowledges that there is roughly a fifty/fifty split in the numbers of adults receiving social care between those who are retired and those of working age. There will be a significant number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) people who need or will need access to adult social care. Some will be disabled and/or retired LGBT+ UNISON members.

Conference recalls that the 2017 National Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Conference passed Motion 34 (Care of older LGBT people) which noted a lack of LGBT+ awareness within the care sector and called on the National LGBT+ Committee to engage with regions and Service Groups to identify what care provisions existed for older LGBT+ people in their areas, Motion 34 made specific reference to the Equality Act 2010 requirements for service providers of social care not to discriminate against service users on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. These provisions apply equally to disabled LGBT+ users of adult social care of working age.

Conference notes Opening Doors London’s research into the housing and care needs of LGBT+ people which found a preference for LGBT+ organisations or LGBT+ accredited organisations to provide accommodation, care and support. Opening Doors London runs the Pride in Care® quality standard awarded to UK organisations assessed as providing quality care and support to older LGBT+ people. Championed by Care England and with training endorsed by Skills for Care, the registered quality mark is an externally verified seal of approval publicly demonstrating commitment to the continuous improvement of LGBT+ inclusion. Conference notes UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter and the campaign for a National Care Service and believes these provide opportunities to bargain and campaign for LGBT+ inclusive care provision.

Conference believes that UNISON’s response to the forthcoming White Paper on the future of adult social care should reflect the needs of LGBT+ disabled and older people.

Conference calls on the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Liaise with the Regional LGBT+ Committees in Northern Ireland, Cymru/ Wales and Scotland to identify aspects of best practice in the provision of adult social care to LGBT+ people;
2. Engage with appropriate UNISON structures to raise awareness of the needs of LGBT+ disabled and older social care users requesting that these are included in any UNISON response to the White Paper on the future of Adult Social Care in England;
3. Raise awareness among LGBT+ members of the Ethical care Charter and UNISON’s campaign for a National Care Service.

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31. WORKING FROM HOME AS A REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

Carried as amended by 31.1

Conference acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in some members working from home. Research carried out by various organisations including UNISON, Ernst and Young, Universities of Strathclyde and Manchester and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reveal that following the pandemic, the majority of people would prefer to return to work flexibly including homeworking, agile and hybrid working. A number of reasons are given for this including safety, flexibility, caring responsibilities, work life balance, disability or simply easier ways of working.

Conference welcomes the fact that UNISON has been campaigning for the option to work from home for disabled members as a reasonable adjustment. Conference recognises that there has been a detrimental impact on people's mental health overall due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that this can be exacerbated by working in isolation. Conference believes that where hybrid or homeworking is in place then employers need to provide appropriate support for the mental health and well being of their workers. Isolation, bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace, domestic abuse, poverty, trying to work at home with caring responsibilities, hate crime, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, not having disclosed sexual orientation or gender identity either at home or in the workplace – may have an impact on people and the boundaries between home and work can become blurred as a result of homeworking.

The capability to enable working from home existed prior to the onset of the pandemic but often was not generally available to workers due to employers refusing to accommodate this even as a reasonable adjustment for disabled members and where it would have clear benefits to the worker's mental health and wellbeing, quality of life and productivity, accessibility, or discrimination. LGBT+ workers may experience discrimination in their working environments, and different sections of the LGBT+ community including Disabled and Black LGBT+ workers, experience structural inequalities in employment, education, economically and environmentally. Consequently, where employers do introduce home or hybrid working policies, then a full equality impact assessment should be carried out.

To Challenge any of this and to support our members, trade unions must remain well organised, keep up recruitment and retention levels and membership density, stay in touch with members and enable them to stay in touch with each other. As well as the new demands this makes at workplace and branch levels it means Self Organised Groups developing new ways of organising.

Conference calls on the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. promote and publicise UNISON's guidance and draft model policy on hybrid working;
2. consider the benefits and detriments that working from home or hybrid working may have for LGBT+ members including disabled and Black LGBT+ workers and provide feedback to the National disabled Members Committee;
3. provide information on reasonable adjustments to LGBT+ members;
4. support the National Disabled Member's campaign for homeworking to be considered a reasonable adjustment;

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5. promote discussion on the new ways of organising to meet the new demands of the post-COVID workplace, and share good practice so that our union and our Self Organised Groups continue to thrive.

32. Solidarity with LGBT+ Afghans - providing a place of safety

Carried

Conference notes with extreme concern the plight of LGBT+ people in Afghanistan which is now run by the Taliban.

When the Taliban ruled in the 1990s they followed a strict interpretation of Sharia law and all the signs point to a similar situation, including homosexuality being punishable by death. In July, German newspaper Bild reported that a Taliban judge vowed to sentence gay men to death by stoning or by being crushed by a nine-foot wall.

Since taking power the Taliban have publicly said women will have a right to education and to work. However, these words are undermined by reports that women have been told to stay at home and not to leave unless accompanied by a man.

There have also been reports of LGBT+ people are living in fear with some being tortured and even killed by the Taliban.

Conference notes that pressure is building on countries to accept vulnerable asylum seekers fleeing persecution at the hands of the Taliban.

True to form, the Conservative government took no notice of a joint letter from Stonewall and Rainbow Migration (a charity that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people through the asylum and immigration system) calling on the prime minister and foreign secretary to bring queer Afghans to safety.

The UK has said it will resettle 5,000 Afghans in the first year and 20,000 in the coming years. Eligibility is aimed at Afghan nationals most in need who have been forced to flee Afghanistan, including women, girls and children at risk given their particular vulnerability. However there is no specific provision aimed at LGBT+ people. The Home Office has said "Further details on eligibility are being developed at pace and will be shared in due course." But in the meantime LGBT+ Afghans are living in fear.

Conference therefore instructs the National LGBT+ committee, working with the national executive council and international department as appropriate, to:

1. To seek appropriate ways to show solidarity with Afghan LGBT+ organisations
2. Lobby the Government to make explicit provision for LGBT+ Afghans in government resettlement schemes
3. Work with Rainbow Migration and other appropriate organisations to lobby the Home Office to take urgent steps to improve the ways in which it deals with LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees.
4. To work with Labour Link to raise these issues with the Labour party.

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35. Response to racism and LGBT+ phobia in mental health services

Carried as amended by 35.1, 35.2

The recent conviction of a police officer for the manslaughter of Dalian Atkinson highlighted the unacceptable risk of a coercive, often violent racist response faced by Black people when they seek support for mental health issues.

A key research finding is that people from Black communities in the United Kingdom (UK), who experience mental health issues also experience higher levels of coercion and poorer long-term outcomes when in contact with mental health services.

Research shows that Taser used increased by 37% last year, 15% of incidents involved a person with a mental health problem. Black people involved in police incidents are five times more likely than white people to experience the use of force against them, including handcuffing and ground restraint, batons, Tasers and firearms.

(Mind response, 29 June 2021)

Black LGBT+ people are also vulnerable to additional mental health issues because of their intersectionality, exposing them to a punitive, disproportionate response from the police and mental health services.

Conference, lack of appropriate support services mean that Black LGBT+ people find their experiences are not well understood by mainstream services. In addition, communities with higher rates of mental ill health often get the least effective support. This applies to all age groups but impact may differ with age.

Young Black LGBT+ people are especially vulnerable. Their mental health has been particularly impacted by pandemic. New research by Just Like Us, surveyed over 3,000 secondary school pupils across the UK, and found Black LGBT+ young people are more likely to be worried for their mental health with 61% worrying about their mental health on a daily basis, compared to 56% of white LGBT+ young people.

These combined factors mean that people from Black LGBT+ communities are less likely to get access to National Health Service (NHS) talking therapy services and less likely to recover if they start treatment. They are many times more likely than white people to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act, to be placed on Community Treatment Orders, continuing the use of coercive powers after they leave hospital, and to have repeated compulsory hospital admissions.

To ensure that services meet the needs of our most marginalised in our society then they must take into account the fundamental causes, wider environmental influences and the individual experiences which in turn effects the wellbeing and healthy life expectancy of the most vulnerable in our society. The best way to achieve this is to make sure that comprehensive health inequalities impact assessments on mental health services are carried out.

The impact of racism, ageism and LGBT+-phobia people encounter when they experience mental health problems is worsened because it reflects and magnifies experiences of systemic racism in everyday life.

Conference therefore calls on the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Work with UNISON's self-organised groups, young members' organisation, retired members' organisation, equality team, the NEC, regions and branches to develop and disseminate the latest information on racism and LGBT+ phobia in mental health responses by police and health services.

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2. Promote the UNISON guidance on bargaining on mental health issues and produce guidance on signposting members to sources of mental health advice and support for Black LGBT+ people.
3. Signpost branches and regions to information, tools and resources on impact assessments of services concerning health equalities.
4. Engage with UNISON participation in initiatives to address mental health inequalities e.g. NHS England's Advancing Mental Health Equalities programme.

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Motion To Other Conferences

ND1. Trans Equality – Louder and Prouder!

Carried

The toxic debate ignited by the government's consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act underlined the importance of our union supporting and representing trans members effectively

Attacks on trans people have escalated further over the last year. Groups trying to roll back the rights of trans people are encouraging supporters to lobby public bodies to replace 'gender' in their equality policies with 'sex' and claim that some have agreed to do so.

There has been a series of press articles about Stonewall having 'lost its way' by becoming trans inclusive, and a sustained attack on Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme. Attacks are being coordinated to undermine support for Stonewall's work on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) equality at work.

The tactics being used are almost identical to the tactics seen around the time of Section 28, when gay men were portrayed as sexual predators and a danger to children to spread fear and mistrust.

Conference recognises that recent years have seen a concerted international campaign against trans people, and there is growing evidence of this being linked to the far right.

Conference notes that:

1. The Southern Poverty Law Centre in the United States (US) reported that in 2017, at an annual right-wing, fundamentalist event called the Values Voter Summit, transphobia was discussed as a tactic to be deployed, because rallying against homosexuals was not working any more. One of the far-right panellists said: "Trans and gender identity are a tough sell, so focus on gender identity to divide and conquer...trans activists need the gay rights movement to help legitimize them...If you separate the T from the alphabet soup, we'll have more success".
2. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation's study on the evolution of extremism in the first 100 days of the Biden Administration found that "Transphobia has long been one of the most major and ubiquitous narratives around which the far right mobilises... Transphobia should be recognised as a security concern."
3. Some anti-trans individuals and groups in the United Kingdom have links with far right and alt right religious groups in the US and elsewhere.
4. Targeting a minority, and spreading false information to provoke hatred and distrust by preying on people's fears, are classic far right recruitment tactics.

UNISON's position is clear: trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid. Conference recognises, however, that UNISON now needs to become more visible and more vocal in promoting Trans equality

Conference therefore calls on the national LGBT+ committee to:

1. Produce a briefing to help members counter the gender critical narrative and provide information on the links with the far right.
2. Pledge support to appropriate organisations, such as Stonewall and Mermaids, that are being subjected to attacks because of their work on Trans inclusion, and explore ways of working together.

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3. Raise the issue of links with the far right with the National Executive Council and explore ways to increase the visibility of UNISON's support for Trans equality.

ND2. DECRIMINALISATION FOR SAFETY

Carried as amended by ND2.1

Conference notes that UNISON's policy on sex work, adopted in 2010, is to support decriminalising the selling of sexual services while introducing a 'sex buyers law' criminalising those who purchase those services.

Conference recognises that the great majority of sex workers are women.

Conference also recognises a significant number of women sex workers identify as LGBT+, and there are many gay, bisexual and trans sex workers who do not identify as women.

Conference notes that national LGBT+ conference policy:

1. Recognises that criminalisation of any kind, including of buyers, increases the risks for sex workers
2. Opposes the introduction of a sex buyers law
3. Recognises sex workers as workers who should have the same rights and protections as workers in other industries.

Conference further notes:

- a) Significant developments since 2010 include Amnesty International's 2016 policy on sex workers, which includes advocating for the decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual adult sex work
- b) Full decriminalisation is supported by many other organisations including the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Royal College of Nursing, trade unions, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Anti Slavery International, and sex workers organisations
- c) The rejection by 2018 UNISON women's conference of the motion "Nordic Model Now!" which called for it to affirm its policy of supporting the Nordic Model, a legal model based on decriminalising the selling of sexual services while introducing a 'sex buyers law'
- d) Poverty, benefit cuts and sanctions have led to an increase in the number of women working in the sex industry, and long waits for Universal Credit payments have led to some turning to 'survival' sex work to pay rent and put food on the table.

Conference further notes New Zealand decriminalised sex work in 2003. The legislation recognises sex work as work, and therefore covered by employment law. The law treats sex workers consent as crucial and gives them the legal right to refuse any client for any reason at any point.

The 'New Zealand model' has been praised by women's rights organisations and international bodies including the WHO as the best legal approach to protect the safety, rights, and health, of people who sell sex.

Conference recognises that decriminalisation is not about 'encouraging' sex work – it's about the safety of people who sell sex. No legal model anywhere in the world has been shown to increase, or decrease, the number of people who sell sex. All that laws can change is whether people do sex work in dangerous conditions or in safer conditions.

Conference believes that UNISON should not call for laws that put sex workers, including women and LGBT+ sex workers, at greater risk.

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Conference therefore resolves that UNISON should not call for the introduction of a 'sex buyers law', and instructs the National Executive Council to begin a dialogue with the National LGBT+ Committee, National Women's Committee and other appropriate bodies within the union with a view to reviewing and advancing UNISON policy in this area.